

'Voice of Democracy' winner ...

One day of the year is not enough

Charles "Drew" Leach is a student at Newton County High School. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Leach of Conehatta. He is a member of Future Business Leaders of America, Mu Alpha Theta, the Beta Club, and he's on the principal's list. He was an award winner in the "Voice of Democracy" essay contest sponsored by the Veteran of Foreign Wars. Here's his essay.

By Charles "Drew" Leach
special to The Star

Upon the gallows there stood a young man around the age of 21. A British officer stepped forward and asked if he had any last words. His reply was, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

The man then fell and was brought to a sudden stop by the rope which was tied around his neck. On the morning of Sept. 22, 1776, this man, Nathan Hale, was executed as a spy for the U.S. Army.

It is men such as this who were willing to give everything for their country, even their lives, who allow our nation to be what it is today. Because of these men, we have freedoms that many countries do not have, the freedom to follow any religion we want, the freedom to practice whatever profession we desire and the freedom to live our lives any way we want.

We, the citizens of this great nation, should honor these men who have done so much to defend it.

Since the founding of our country, our soldiers have done everything in their power to defend and protect the principles on which it was created. If not for our veterans, we would have none of the freedoms that our government guarantees us today. Our government and, indeed, our entire country, relies on our soldiers to stop those who wish to destroy us and our way of life.

This protection, however, does not come without a price. This price is paid by our soldiers. Our veterans have gone through much suffering. They have felt

pain, the pain of seeing a friend or brother killed before their eyes. They have felt fear, the fear that at any moment, they or anyone around them could die next.

For many, this fear came true. In World War I and World War II combined, 525,014 U.S. soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their country, and the entire world, from the reign of oppressive dictators.

In the Korean and Vietnam conflicts combined, 112,465 Americans gave their lives to prevent the spread of communism and preserve democracy for future generations.

Their service gives new meaning to the phrase, "Freedom isn't free." Our veterans, both living and dead, have paid a heavy toll to provide us with this nation, a nation where we are free, where we can live

our lives as we see fit and where we need not fear being executed by the government for little or no reason. We owe this and much more to our veterans.

Our veterans have gone through much to protect our country. We should honor these men who willingly face death to serve our country and those that live there.

But how? How should we celebrate the great sacrifices of

these brave men and women? Is simply setting aside one day out of the year enough to honor the devotion they gave to our great country? The answer is a resounding "no!"

Each day we should celebrate our veterans. Each day we should honor those men who gave their all in service to the freedoms which we enjoy. All we have is due to these brave men — our veterans.



Leach

MCC staff joins fight

Bill Mabry is the director of the East Central Contract Procurement Center at Meridian Community College — a technical assistance center which assists local companies doing business with the federal government.

"We are funded by the Defense Logistics Agency with matching funds from the state and local government," Bill said.

"Our services help provide sources of supply from which the Department of Defense can order supplies and services. Specifically, MCC is the reason that we can offer this free service to Mississippi businesses in a 12-county area."

By Bill Mabry
special to The Star

I used to work as a civilian for the Department of Defense. I was in contracts, buying supplies for the U.S. Army during the Vietnam Conflict and supplies in support of 15 ships for the Naval Oceanographic Office.

Also, I was in Saudi Arabia as a contract administrator for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I have seen firsthand the needs and urgencies of our front line troops and the environment faced by our troops in the Middle East.

I want all of you to know that I appreciate what you are doing.

I was in an Army Reserve Unit that was activated for the Berlin Crisis. We had no idea how long we would be activated and felt that the general public didn't appreciate what we were doing. This is not the case now. Everyone I know, or come in contact with, is grateful for what you all are doing.

In my building, we have had one person whose unit was activated leave in January to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom Phase III.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Tally is with the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion, which is part of the 155 Separate Armored Brigade. He leaves a wife, son and daughter in the Meridian area. Previously, he served in Desert Storm.

We had one person who left to become active duty in the Air National Guard. Maj. Eric Bratu is an environmental scientist currently serving full-time with the 186th Air Refueling Wing's Civil Engineering Squadron.

Our prayers are with you all.